

Purchase Knob Scavenger Hunt

(late summer/early fall)

*The clues for this scavenger hunt are listed in the order you will come cross them on the trail. Some, like plants, may be found in multiple locations though. Have fun and don't forget to share your photos with me on **Hope and Feather Travel's** Facebook page!*



Look for a purple wildflower on the side of the trail with 3 "lips" for petals. This wildflower is called **Lobelia**. Native Americans once thought that if the ground seeds from it were secretly added to someone's food, they would stop arguing with their enemies! You'll also find another blueish-purple flower blooming in profusion right now called **Lowrie's Blue Wood Asters**.



Keep walking and look for a white wildflower on the side of the trail with serrated leaves (that means they'll look jagged on the edge). It's called **Snakeroot**. Abraham Lincoln's mom died because of this plant. If cows eat Snakeroot, it poisons their milk and causes "milk sickness" in humans if they drink it.



Eventually, the road curves fairly hard to the right, but on the left side in this curve is a big hill leading up the mountain and you'll see a creek coming down it. Remember this creek, because we'll learn more about it later in the hike!

On the left side of the trail, after you pass the creek and round the curve, look for a brown, low lying plant that looks a little bit like small brown ears of corn coming out of the ground. This is called **Squaw Root** or "**Bear Corn**" and black bears love to eat it in the spring because it helps them poop (think about it, they haven't pooped all winter since they've been hibernating)!



As you continue your hike, look for several trees on the left side that are growing on the edge of the embankment and have exposed roots. Count how many you find (I bet you'll find a bunch of them! Trees are really strong and hang on tight when they need to! See if you can find some that grow around big rocks and boulders. Finally, **look for one the left side of the trail that has recently fallen.** What do you think made it fall? And can you find any evidence on it that it may have covered part of the trail when it first fell?

Eventually you'll go through an open green gate. Just before you go past it, look on the left for a tree whose bark looks a bit flaky. Its trunk splits into two segments. This tree is called a **Carolina Silverbell.** In the spring, its flowers are white and when they fall off the tree, they look like snow from a distance!



After you pass through the green gate, you'll climb the biggest hill on this hike, but don't worry, it's over quickly! As you climb, **look for more trees whose roots are exposed and listen for little critters in the woods.** Squirrels and chipmunks are getting ready for winter and are very busy this time of year, gathering and storing food, like acorns. Oftentimes, you can spot chipmunks scurrying about in the woods from the trail. Speaking of acorns, watch your head because they're falling out of oak trees right now!

After you crest the big hill (yay, you made it!), you'll curve to the left. Look for a bunch of bushes with dark green, elongated leaves. This is called **rhododendron.** In the winter, its leaves curl up tightly when it's cold outside! In the spring and summer, it will be filled with big blooms in beautiful shades of pink, usually. They are evergreen, which means they don't lose their leaves in the winter.



Just after the rhododendron, turn your attention to the forest floor and look for a low-lying plant with thin strands of dark green. They are called **club moss**, but they are actually in the fern family. They have been used as medicine for a very long time, but you won't believe what else they can do! Since they are ferns, they reproduce and create more of themselves with spores, and their spores are very flammable. Native Americans used them in ceremonies and would throw them into a fire to create a big "flash" of fire! They were also used for a flash when someone took a picture, before cameras had flashes. And they were also part of fireworks a long time ago too!



Keep walking and look for this big evergreen tree on the left side of the trail. **The wispy light green stuff covering it is lichen.** Lichen is made up of both fungi and algae and there's a fun way to remember that fact: "Freddie Fungus took a "lichen" to Alice Algae!" Look to the right and see if you can find a fruit tree with red fruit hanging from its branches. What is this delicious fruit?!



Now, you'll walk through a more wooded section of the trail again, but soon you'll emerge from the woods. Look to your left and see if you can spot a big house on a hill. That's where you're headed! On the left, you'll also see a large grove of evergreen trees called **Fraser Fir**. In fact, trees here used to be sold for Christmas trees!

As you continue hiking, look for a grove of trees with light bark that looks like it's peeling away from the tree. These are called **birch trees**. The papery bark is very flammable and can help you start a campfire.



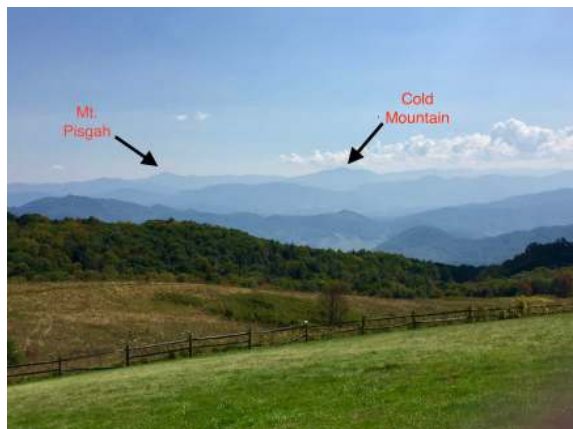
Soon, you'll be heading up the final hill towards the house which is actually the **Appalachian Highlands Science Learning Center**. Look to your left beyond the meadow and you'll see a rounded mountain top. You're looking at Purchase Knob!

Look to the right and at the top of the hill you'll probably see a metal structure. This is a **weather monitoring station** but there is also a webcam mounted on this structure. When you get home, look it up with this website:

<https://www.nature.nps.gov/air/webcams/parks/grsmpkcam/grsmpkcam.cfm>

Once you get to the **Learning Center**, head to the front deck and take in the view! This house used to be long to a woman named Kathryn McNeil and this was her family's summer home! Just beyond the split rail fence to the left, you might be able to appreciate where the ground is a bit flatter. That's because it used to have a tennis court there. There was also a swimming pool on the grounds! Ms. McNeil even wrote a lovely book about her summers spent on this beautiful mountain. It's called *Purchase Knob: Essays from a Mountain Notebook*.

Look out at **Purchase Knob** again. It's the closest mountain to you with the rounded top, just to your left. Way in the distance, you'll see a lot more mountains. Look for one with a more pointed top and see if you can find a tower on the top of it (it's not easy to see unless it's a clear day). This is the transmission **tower for WLOS-Channel 13!** Follow the mountain range to the right and you'll notice a big mountain with a broader top. This is **Cold Mountain** and there's a famous novel written about this mountain.



Now find a mowed path just beyond the split rail fence in front of the house. You should take it down the mountain back to the road. Once you get to the bottom of this big hill, look for a sign that says "Ferguson Cabin" with an arrow pointing to the left. Follow this path, looking for **apple trees** along the way until you come to a **tiny log cabin**. It's okay to go inside. There is an informational sign inside the cabin that tells you its cool history. **Take your photo** in front of the cabin, and I'd love for you to share it with me on Hope and Feather Travels Facebook page!

Look for a large cage on the left side of the cabin, if you're facing it. It is used by the Park to capture wild boar. They are not supposed to be here but made an appearance around 1920 when they escaped from a hunting preserve. They compete with black bear and other mammals for food and are very destructive. The Park is working diligently all the time to reduce their population, but sadly, they will probably never completely eradicate them.

Look for a sign in the front yard at the cabin that says "To Cataloochee Divide Trail." Follow the path beyond this sign for just a couple of minutes and you'll come to a **small stream**. Do you remember the stream coming down the mountain when you were hiking up? It actually starts very, very close to where you are standing, as it trickles out of the ground!

Turn over some rocks and see if you can **spot a salamander or crayfish** (a.k.a. "crawdad"). If you find one, please be very gentle with them, if you pick them up, and only keep them out of the water for a few seconds. Salamanders breathe through their skin and they need to stay moist. Great Smoky Mountains National Park, where you are hiking, is considered the salamander capital of the world!

Once you're finished playing in the water, backtrack on the trail you walked in on until it meets the gravel road you walked up to the house on. Turn right here and walk down the mountain back to your car. I hope you had a great time looking for treasures on your hike! :-)